

15 May 76

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL HEATING and AIR CONDITIONING

Shopping Centers Go Underground With Aid of Air Conditioning

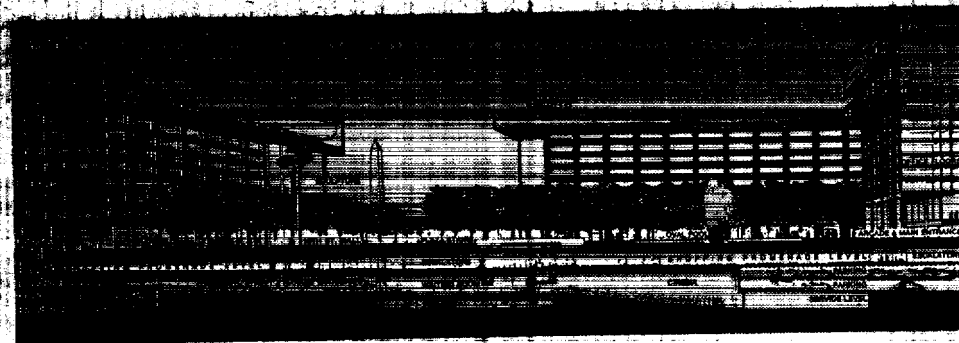
An underground shopping center? It's finally happened. The Japanese have one—an 18-acre, 300-shop center in Tokyo that is completely air conditioned.

Cities that are less congested than Tokyo may not be attracted to the idea, but the underground shopping center innovation does point up two facts: Shopping centers are among the most innovative types of buildings, having developed in less than three decades from small collections of shops to entire "commercial cities;" and air conditioning has been one of the biggest forces behind many of these changes.

Shopping centers date back to the post-World War II period when retailers moved to the suburbs to find customers and banded together in small groups to provide

commercial centers with adequate parking. Today, the new shopping center is more likely to be a gigantic operation with parking above, and below as well as around, with a large air conditioned mall where trees grow and flowers bloom, and with stores that have open fronts and invite prospective customers to come in and browse around.

The new shopping center is no longer a purely suburban phenomenon—many of them are found in the centers of cities. For example, the new L'Enfant Plaza development in downtown Washington, D.C., consists of four large buildings facing an open plaza, and beneath the plaza is a shopping promenade with 32 shops and a theatre. Beneath the shopping promenade, there are two levels of parking. All of the shopping promenade is air conditioned.



This drawing of the new L'Enfant Plaza complex in downtown Washington, D.C., shows how air conditioning is affecting the design of new commercial facilities. Beneath the Plaza is a completely air-conditioned shopping promenade and a movie house.